

Business Notions of Democracy : the Turkish Experience in the 1990s

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RÉSUMÉS

This article examines three basic factors that motivated big business groups in Turkey to support the cause of democratisation since the end of the 1980s: democratisation as a means of facilitating Turkey's membership in the European Union, as a method of putting the bureaucracy under bourgeois discipline, and as a way of subordinating the political class to the will of the bourgeoisie. Parallel to this, some important differences between the Turkish bourgeoisie's conceptions of democracy in the Cold War and post-Cold War periods are explored. Hence, it is argued that during the Cold War, corresponding to the influences coming from the USA, the Turkish bourgeoisie's conception of democracy did not go beyond the basics of political democracy: a relatively unfettered party competition, regular elections, and a limited freedom of speech. By the end of the 1980s, however, mobilized by the goal of integrating Turkey with the European Union, big business groups have come forward with loudly expressed demands for the expansion of political liberalization and for the deepening of democratisation, including primarily the incorporation of the Islamic and Kurdish political movements into the political system. In the final part of the article, it is claimed that the chances for the Turkish state to get transformed into a bourgeois democratic state are still very low.